UNITED NATIONS

A

General Assembly

Distr.
GENERAL

A/52/573
5 November 1997

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Fifty-second session
Agenda item 97 (f)

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC COOPERATION: FIRST UNITED NATIONS DECADE FOR THE ERADICATION OF POVERTY

Observance of the International Year for the Eradication of Poverty (1996) and recommendations for the rest of the Decade

Report of the Secretary-General

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. In one of the major political statements of the last half century the leaders of the world who gathered at the World Summit for Social Development, held in Copenhagen from 6 to 12 March 1995, committed all countries to the goal of "eradicating poverty in the world, through decisive national actions and international cooperation"[1]

2. It will be recalled that the General Assembly, on 20 December 1995, adopted resolution 50/107, entitled "Observance of the International Year for the Eradication of Poverty and proclamation of the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty". At its fifty-first session, the Assembly adopted resolution 51/178, entitled "First United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty". Among other provisions, it resolved that the theme for the Decade would be "Eradicating poverty is an ethical, social, political and economic imperative of humankind" (para. 3).

3. In response to these decisions poverty eradication has become one of the principal areas of concentration throughout the United Nations system. For example, both the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Bank have made poverty reduction their predominant objective. Many activities were organized throughout the United Nations system to observe the International Year for the Eradication of Poverty during 1996, which had the theme proclaimed by the General Assembly, "Poverty can and must be eradicated throughout the world". The theme for 1997, "Poverty, environment, and development", received extensive consideration at the nineteenth special session of the Assembly in June 1997.

4. Two major reports have been published this year that describe the extent of poverty, analyse trends and discuss poverty reduction strategies. The first, the Report on the World Social Situation 1997[2] dealt extensively with such issues as the measurement of poverty, trends and patterns of global poverty, and policies for poverty reduction. In addition, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Human Development Report 1997[3] was entirely devoted to eradication of poverty.

5. A third report, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) Trade and Development Report 1997,[4] has as its major theme "Globalization, distribution and growth", and offers rigorous analysis of the forces causing growth of global inequity. Yet a fourth report, published last year, "Poverty reduction and the World Bank: progress and challenges in the 1990s", discusses the issue from the World Bank's perspective.

II. TARGETS AND TRENDS

6. The most comprehensive estimates of poverty have been made by the World Bank, which used as a basis for the assessment those living on US$ 1 or less per day. The World Bank concluded that the incidence of poverty in developing countries and in countries with economies in transition fell slightly from 30.0 per cent in 1987 to 29.5 per cent in 1993, but that the absolute number of the world's poor rose from 1.23 billion to 1.31 billion during the same years.

The overwhelming majority of people living on $1 a day or less are located in sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia and China, but there are many tens of millions also in Latin America, the Caribbean, and West Asia. There is also considerable poverty in developed countries and in countries with economies in transition.

7. The Human Development Report 1997 effectively illuminated the nature of poverty:

> It is in the deprivation of the lives people lead that poverty manifests itself. Poverty can mean more than a lack of what is necessary for material well-being. It can also mean the denial of opportunities and choices most basic to human development - to lead a long, healthy, creative life and to enjoy a decent standard of living, freedom, dignity, self-esteem and the respect of others.
>
> For policy-makers, the poverty of choices and opportunities is often more relevant than the poverty of income, for it focuses on the causes of poverty and leads directly to strategies of empowerment and other actions to enhance opportunities for everyone.[5]

8. The reports show that many hundreds of millions of people, mostly but not exclusively in East and South-East Asia, are working their way out of poverty and that there are excellent prospects of further reduction in poverty in those regions. The reports also agree that, since the number of people living in absolute poverty is still increasing, changes in strategy and additional policies are essential to prevent the growth of poverty and rapidly reduce the terrible deprivation of those now living in poverty.

9. It is too early to assess trends since the Social Summit, but it is worth recalling the targets for means of reducing poverty adopted in Copenhagen and giving a few relatively recent assessments in order to illustrate the extent of progress that is required.

Education

10. Universal primary education is central in the fight against poverty. The Social Summit set a target of universal access to basic education and completion of primary education by at least 80 per cent of primary school-age children by the year 2000.

11. In recent decades there has been a major expansion of education, but considerable gaps remain. Worldwide enrolment since 1960 in primary and secondary schools has risen from an estimated 250 million children to more than 1 billion. East Asia, Oceania, Latin America and the Caribbean had attained net enrolment in primary education of close to 100 per cent by 1993, and south Asian and Arab States over 90 per cent, but sub-Saharan Africa has a long way to go, with only about 73 per cent enrolment. (Report of the World Social Situation 1997, table 5.1)

12. Enrolment in secondary education still remains unsatisfactory despite progress. Developing countries as a whole increased gross enrolment ratios from 42 per cent in 1990 to 46 per cent in 1993 (sub-Saharan Africa having increased

from 22 per cent to only 23 per cent). In comparison, there is 95 per cent enrolment in the industrialized countries and in countries with economies in transition. The gap in the duration of compulsory schooling between the developing and developed countries remains significant. In most developing countries, education is compulsory for between 4 and 9 years, while in the developed countries, it is compulsory for at least 8 years (10 years in the United States, 11 years in the United Kingdom, 12 years in Germany). (Report of the World Social Situation 1997, table 5.3)

13. As regards the gender gap, in a majority of countries the illiteracy rate among women is significantly higher than for men. According to UNESCO's World Education Report 1995,[6] in 61 countries, the gap between the male and female adult literacy rates is estimated to be higher than 10 per cent, and in 40 countries, it is estimated to be higher than 20 per cent. The report notes that, although the absolute number of illiterate adults appears to have levelled off globally, it is still increasing in sub-Saharan Africa, Arab States, and southern Asia, with women forming a substantial majority in each case.

14. Progress among the signatories to the 1990 World Declaration on Education for All and the Framework for Action (the Jomtien Declaration)[7] was assessed at a meeting held in Amman, Jordan, in June 1996. The key conclusion of the meeting (A/52/183-E/1997/74, annex) was that "there has been significant progress in basic education, not in all countries nor as much as had been hoped, but progress that is nonetheless real". The report went on to state that "the priority of priorities must continue to be the education of women and girls".

Health

15. The Social Summit set four immediate health and nutrition related goals - that by the year 2000

(a) Life expectancy should be not less than 60 years in any country;

(b) Mortality rates of infants and children under five years should be reduced by one third of the 1990 level or 50 to 70 per 1,000 live births, whichever is less;

(c) Reduction in maternal mortality by one half of the 1990 level;

(d) Attainment by all peoples of the world of a level of health that will permit them to lead a socially and economically productive life, and to this end, ensuring primary health care for all.

16. According to the World Health Organization (WHO) The World Health Report 1997,[8] life expectancy for both sexes continued to improve globally, reaching a global average of 65 years by 1996 (63 for men and 67 for women). Progress has been especially good in Asia overall and South-East Asia, in particular, and in the developed countries. But in 50 countries, it was under 60 years for both sexes. In sub-Saharan Africa and Eastern Europe, life expectancy has actually decreased recently.

Hunger and malnutrition

17. The Social Summit set the goal of achieving food security for all. In the developing world, the absolute number and the proportion of undernourished people fell between 1969-1971 and 1990-1992, but in 30 countries the percentage increased. All in all, about 840 million people in the developing world were undernourished in the early 1990s. The situation was worst in sub-Saharan Africa, where the number of undernourished people doubled between 1969-1971 and 1990-1992, affecting 43 per cent of the total population in 1990-1992.

18. The World Food Summit, which was held in Rome from 13 to 17 November 1996,[9] apart from reaffirming "the commitment to eradicating poverty and inequality", also renewed the world's commitment to attacking hunger and malnutrition, and adopted a target to reduce "the number of undernourished people to half their present level no later than 2015". A mid-term review is to be held to ascertain whether it is possible to achieve that target by 2010. A notable related initiative is the "2020 vision for food, agriculture, and the environment" launched by the International Food Policy Research Institute.[10] In its annual report it foresees a fairly good situation in the years to come if rates of investment in agricultural research and development are maintained. Concern has been expressed recently on the decline in the share of ODA dedicated to agriculture. This trend should be quickly reversed.

III. NATIONAL STRATEGIES FOR POVERTY REDUCTION

19. Experience is clarifying the types of policies that work well in the fight against poverty, although conditions in every country differ and national strategies must be the direct result of attention to national conditions. The Copenhagen Declaration and the Programme of Action adopted at the Social Summit are a good guide to the preparation of national poverty eradication strategies. It may be useful to think of such strategy in five parts.

Time-bound national poverty reduction goals

20. First, it is important to set time-bound national poverty reduction goals, as a target to aim for and to ensure a strong focus for policy development and against which achievements can be judged. The leaders meeting at Copenhagen committed themselves to "national policies and strategies geared to ... reducing inequalities and eradicating absolute poverty by a target date to be specified by each country in its national context".[11]

21. Many countries have set national targets. For example, China reported to the General Assembly during the debate on follow-up to the Social Summit during October that its ninth five-year plan (1996-2000) for national economic and social development set out the goal of eradicating poverty by the end of this century. The plan and outline are being implemented in poverty-stricken areas in the form of development-oriented poverty relief. The 1997 Human Development Report notes that about 30 countries have such poverty reduction targets. It is essential that many more do so. Thus, by the year 2000, when the special session of the General Assembly is to be held to review the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development, the Assembly would be

able to receive full reports on the enunciation of national targets, strategies for their implementation, and achievements from countries.

22. In this regard, it is appropriate to welcome the recent ministerial decision of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) to support a global poverty reduction goal of halving poverty by the year 2015. This decision has the potential to spur action not only in developing countries, but among donor countries, and to offer the international community a clear framework for evaluating actions of both groups of countries.

Sustained strong rates of economic and employment growth

23. Second, is the importance of strengthening economic development through seeking to sustain strong rates of economic and employment growth. A major constraint on the reduction of poverty in many countries has been the slowing of aggregate global rates of economic growth. However in 1996 and 1997, significant positive rates of real per capita growth have been more widespread than in any year since the beginning of the 1980s, offering the prospect of improved conditions for poverty reduction.

24. The reports mentioned above all include a discussion of important factors that contribute to strong growth of opportunities for productive activity. Access to factors of production such as land and credit, education and training, technology and information, and access to markets and to efficient transport and communications infrastructure are crucial. These will encourage entrepreneurship, which is vital to the establishment and growth of small and medium-sized enterprises. Outlays on research and development yield a high rate of return.

25. These outlays will be most effective when they are part of a strategy aiming at labour-intensive growth, which is often in the agricultural, service and small-industry sectors. Not only is the aggregate rate of real economic growth per head important: the nature and quality of that growth are as important. For example, most employment growth in advanced economies during the past decade and a half has been in the service sector, where between 60 and 70 per cent of the employed workforce in those countries are now active. Further, most employment growth has been in the small and medium-sized enterprise sectors rather than in large corporations or government. Economic and employment growth strategies that concentrate on those sectors can be oriented in ways that minimize net energy use and environmental damage.

26. Rural development remains central to poverty reduction efforts and often includes agrarian reform to expand egalitarian small-holder systems, investment in marketing infrastructure and extension of rural credit and savings institutions, and protection of food systems from imports of subsidized food, in order to ensure fair prices to provide incentives for agricultural investment.

27. The Trade and Development Report 1997 shows clearly the importance in the successful East Asian countries of government tax incentives and other incentives to enterprises in all sectors so that they retain and reinvest profits. Retained earnings are commonly the most readily available source of

capital for corporate investment. High levels of private investment are a necessary condition for rapid economic growth.

Framework of public policy

28. This leads into the third aspect of a comprehensive poverty eradication strategy, which is the framework of public policy. Important aspects of effective public policy include democratic, accountable and transparent government; professional, honest, efficient and fair public administration, including of the tax office and legal system; and the universal provision of accessible and freely available services such as primary education, skills training and basic health care. Steady improvements in transport and communication are everywhere essential.

29. The regulatory framework must be attuned to the requirements of individual countries, which will not automatically involve complete deregulation, but rather appropriate regulation with effective enforcement. A rather more careful assessment of what has worked well in other advanced and developing countries can be revealing.

Increasing opportunities for the poor

30. A fourth element should be measures especially targeted at increasing opportunities for the poor and measures aiming for an improvement in the equity of the distribution of income, wealth and power. Measures targeted at support for the poor and at increasing their income-earning opportunities are vital to offset some of the terrible disadvantages of the poor as they attempt to support themselves. Targeted programmes for the poor include those aimed at rural development and at increasing productivity in the informal sector, such as micro-credit arrangements, information and extension services, subsidized employment programmes and special training opportunities.

31. The best redistributive policies are those which are embedded in equitable growth strategies. Growth with equity is quite feasible, and prospects for equitable growth are enhanced when there are also supportive policies such as progressive tax systems, anti-trust legislation and anti-corruption measures. The critical task in the remaining years of the Decade for the Eradication of Poverty is for the extension of those policies which have worked to those parts of the world where they need a more determined application, especially in South Asia, sub-Saharan Africa and parts of Latin America.

32. Both the third and fourth parts of a poverty reduction strategy require significant increases in social spending (including population programmes) as part of public expenditures. Most of these increases have to come from domestic sources, but in the case of low-income countries, ODA is crucial. The Human Development Report 1997 estimates the additional cost of "combating poverty" at about $40 billion a year.[12]

33. Poverty reduction strategies will require a significant increase in public investment and social expenditure as a ratio of overall GDP in a large number of developing countries. The history of poverty eradication in the OECD countries is largely a history of sustained growth supported by the rise of public social

expenditures. Social progress in developing countries will thus also require higher levels of revenue collection - from progressive taxation systems efficiently managed - if social justice is an important element of national goals.

34. The anti-poverty effort will require a switch of resources to the social sectors. Currently, the overall ratio is relatively low in developing countries; partial data suggest that about 13 per cent of national budgets are being spent on basic services. The 20:20 rule is a useful goal: 20 per cent of overseas aid directed to human services matched with 20 per cent of outlays of the recipient countries. Reduction of military spending would release a significant part of the required resources in most countries - developing, transitional and industrialized.

35. The future of the poverty eradication effort in the developing countries will be influenced not only by overall economic growth but also by how ratios such as that of human services to GDP evolve in relation to national income. Higher economic growth will allow greater absolute and proportional government expenditures on social services. Yet recent international discussion about development issues embodies a basic contradiction: developing countries are enjoined, on the one hand, to reduce the role of the state and government expenditures and, on the other, to pay more attention to social sectors and poverty eradication.

36. For those developing countries in which economic growth is forecast to be reasonably high, government expenditures on social services can increase with relative ease. The public sector will need to absorb a larger proportion of GDP to cater to growing social demands, including those for poverty eradication, but this will also require higher levels of revenue collection in those countries. Simply enforcing existing tax laws more effectively would generate the required revenue in many countries.

37. In those countries in which economic growth is expected to be low, especially in low-income countries, a serious dilemma occurs. Poverty eradication will require above all the reinvigoration of economic growth. It would be misleading to expect social progress without such accelerated economic development. Experience shows that accelerated economic growth is a necessary though not a sufficient condition for a significant increase in social expenditures. In a low-growth situation, the ability to raise resources through taxation is tightly constrained. In these countries, additional revenue sources such as ODA and debt reduction will be critical if poverty eradication is to be effective.

IV. INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION IN SUPPORT OF POVERTY REDUCTION

38. Sustained domestic effort alone is therefore not enough. Strengthened international economic cooperation is also essential. Upgrading of the framework of global public goods is essential to improving the prospects of efficient and equitable development for all countries. The fifth element of poverty eradication strategy is thus strengthened international cooperation. Two obvious elements are ODA and debt relief.

39. It is important for donor countries urgently to reverse the decline in ODA to developing countries. According to the OECD's "Development Cooperation 1997 Report", total ODA by Development Assistance Committee members amounted to just 0.25 per cent of their combined GNP in 1996, the lowest figure recorded since comparable statistics began in 1950. Unweighted country effort, though, averaged 0.40 per cent, which illuminates the smallness of the ratio in countries that drag the figure down. Some modest hope for a reversal of the trend in the near future is offered by a few recently elected governments that have announced plans to increase aid, notably those of Norway and the United Kingdom, but other major donors show no sign of plans to increase aid.

40. Several causes for the decline in ODA are clear:

(a) Fiscal restraint in industrialized countries is the principal reason, though the ratio of aid to donor countries' budgets is small;

(b) Information about aid is sometimes unbalanced. While there has been waste and ineffectiveness in some aid programmes, the success stories, especially in East, South-East and South Asia, which were early and large beneficiaries of aid, are not sufficiently publicized. The discussions at the time of the fiftieth anniversary of the Marshall Plan did highlight some of the successes of foreign aid. Many developing countries have undertaken drastic measures to improve domestic policies. This has increased the chances of aid being used more effectively;

(c) The substantial increase in private flows to developing countries may have led to the notion that aid is now less necessary, but it bears repeating that private flows to developing countries are highly nationally selective. Most countries receive little benefit, and even in those countries which benefit from inflows of private capital, concessional capital is still valuable for infrastructure, agricultural development and human services. In low-income countries the need for ODA remains particularly high. Indeed the total need for ODA in the developing world is rising, not declining.

41. Debt reduction is also crucial. Although alleviation measures have helped many countries, such measures not only do not go far enough, but will also take a long period to be fully implemented. Indeed, even when they are fully implemented, the debt burden will continue to weigh heavily on a large number of countries. Total debt of developing countries has risen relentlessly from $1.6 trillion in 1993 to $1.9 trillion in 1995.

42. Regrettably, the political momentum for debt relief has subsided, especially since commercial banks perceive little threat on the debt front. The HIPC (heavily indebted, poor countries) initiative is valuable but even when fully operational will leave untouched much of the debt of severely indebted low-income countries. A further major initiative on debt relief is required to lead to a lasting solution.

43. In a world where international integration is growing rapidly, much more than increased aid and debt relief is required. For example, liberalization of financial markets may well have contributed to increasing capital flows to a dozen or so developing countries, but the resulting increase in financial

volatility in some of them now threatens not only their own development but also that in many others. More effective global means of reducing financial instability are essential. It is also essential for all countries to adopt and maintain responsible macroeconomic policies (though there is room for some disagreement about exactly what they are). It is not enough, however, simply to urge greater fiscal and monetary prudence on individual countries when the forces they are facing are beyond their capacity to contain no matter what their policies.

44. It would be in the interests not only of the business sectors of all countries, but also of the poor, to increase and strengthen the range of measures available to improve the orderliness of international financial markets. The poor and vulnerable generally suffer most from economic and financial disruption because they have so few ways of protecting themselves. It is striking, too, how often adjustment measures recommended for coping with financial crises include cutting wages, reducing public outlays on basic services such as education and health and cutting taxes, and how rarely they include measures that would reduce the income or services of the economically secure.

45. Crucial steps to reducing the risks and costs of financial volatility include (a) strengthening of domestic financial and banking supervision - "finding the right regulatory regime" as recommended by Joseph Stiglitz, the chief economist of the World Bank, (b) increasing international surveillance of economic and financial conditions in neighbouring countries, (c) strictly avoiding sharp interest rate increases, and (d) increasing the transaction cost of short-term financial flows.

46. Similarly, the current lack of equitable balance in the application of trade liberalization doctrine is striking. Unless the developed countries further and effectively reduce the barriers to trade with the developing world, such as their agricultural subsidies, and also recognize the legitimacy of the importance of allowing dynamic change in comparative advantage, the trade liberalization regime will be increasingly perceived as a self-interested instrument of the well off.

V. RAISING AWARENESS AND STRENGTHENING MOTIVATION

47. In relation to the observance of the International Year for the Eradication of Poverty and plans for the First United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty, many United Nations system-wide initiatives were put into place to ensure a coordinated follow-up to the recent global conferences. Several purposes are served by declaration of the Decade: to highlight the severity of the poverty-related deprivation and to raise awareness of the issues; to instigate international and national action to eradicate poverty; and to strengthen commitment to the time-bound goals adopted and recommended by the Social Summit.

48. The issue of poverty has gained global attention thanks to the World Summit for Social Development and the prominence given to the issue by many countries, the United Nations system, including the World Bank, and more recently the OECD.

Within the United Nations context, poverty and poverty-related issues are at the core of deliberations in a wide range of funds and programmes and specialized agencies. To a certain extent, poverty eradication has become a proxy for development issues in general, especially as they relate to the low-income countries. The danger is that poverty eradication becomes just another slogan or that the entire complex of development issues is reduced to poverty eradication only. Both these dangers must be avoided.

49. Of particular relevance to the eradication of poverty are the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) task forces on employment and sustainable livelihoods, on the enabling environment, on gender and on basic social services for all. The task forces have given different parts of the United Nations system an opportunity to prepare coordinated plans and policies for improving the impact of the system on economic and social development including the eradication of poverty. The reports of those task forces were presented to ACC at its October 1997 session.

50. Much activity in the United Nations funds and programmes and the World Bank has focused on preparing national level analyses and reports. In his annual report, the UNDP Administrator stated that as part of the follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development by the end of 1997 over 100 countries will have national 'human development reports'. These reports have several objectives, but they do constitute an excellent basis for poverty eradication plans. In the aftermath of the World Summit for Social Development, UNDP has also initiated projects under the rubric 'Poverty strategies initiatives' in about 60 countries. It is crucial that this work be closely geared to the poverty eradication goals of the Copenhagen commitments.

51. Poverty reduction now has a more prominent place in the activities of the World Bank. The basis for action is the national poverty assessment, of which 93 had been completed by about the middle of this year. UNICEF, in its progress report on follow-up to the World Summit for Children, indicated that by the end of 1996, 167 countries had signed the Summit Declaration and that 155 countries had finalized or were in the process of finalizing their national plans of action. Some 50 countries have formulated substantial programmes of action and a further 26 are planning to do so. Other agencies such as the International Labour Organization and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations have given and are giving concentrated attention to poverty reduction.

52. The nineteenth special session of the General Assembly on the overall review and appraisal of the implementation of Agenda 21 in June this year gave particular attention to eradicating poverty. The section of the report of the Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole (A/S-10/29) effectively summarizes the themes that have been discussed in this report.

53. This increased emphasis within the United Nations system on strategies and policies related to poverty is a direct response to the decisions of the General Assembly. However, several issues need more attention. It is crucial that each country itself prepare national reports on poverty reduction with whatever assistance from the United Nations system upon request. Many will need or want only limited outside assistance. In countries that request United Nations UN assistance, it would be valuable to prepare synthesized reports for each country

on the basis of the inputs listed above from different parts of the United Nations system, in line with the recommendations contained in the report of the ACC Task Force on the Enabling Environment. Contributions from non-governmental organizations and academic sources would also be of value.

54. It is important to increase the role of targets and specific action plans in those reports. It cannot be emphasized enough that unless adequate leadership is asserted, consensus sought, and adequate resources dedicated at the national level, no amount of international cooperation will redress the problem. It is obviously important, too, that the task of preparing national reports on poverty be extended to those countries which are not yet covered.

55. The possibility of more action at the subregional level also warrants exploration. Many subregional entities have secretariats that are close to the member States and could act as catalysts for action. Furthermore, subregional groupings offer a useful forum for peer review examination of policies and progress, somewhat on the lines of donor performance reviews by the OECD countries. The importance of South-South cooperation is explicitly recognized throughout the system. Subregional cooperation is a concrete method of giving shape to that objective. Some initiatives have already been tentatively launched by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat in this direction.

56. The observance of the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty (17 October) is being strengthened, as happened this year in major functions during the day and in the evening at United Nations Headquarters. In future it is proposed that the Day be marked by concentrating on the themes that the Assembly would choose for the specific year in question. Planning has begun for intellectually and politically substantive activities on the Day in 1998.

57. It is at the national level that more attention needs to be devoted to highlighting the observance of the Day. It is proposed that the United Nations system offices in each country be involved in organizing events and discussions on national poverty issues. In many countries information on national poverty is not sufficiently known, nor is the determination that exists at the international level to address poverty.

58. At the international level, within the context of the Assembly's deliberations on the Decade, it may be desirable to focus on national and international action in alternate years. The theme for 1998 has already been agreed upon: 'Poverty, human rights and development'. 1998 also happens to be the year marking the fiftieth anniversary of the signing of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It is proposed that attention be given to poverty within the events planned for the year. The Assembly is to select the theme for 1999 and 2000. For 1999, consideration could be given to 'Poverty eradication lessons from industrial countries'. The special session of the Assembly in 2000 to review the implementation of the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action will provide the theme in that year.

V. CONCLUSION

59. While there is reason to be encouraged about progress with poverty reduction, there is even greater reason for concern. While opening up more widely to the world economy is beneficial to some countries, many have seen few net benefits. Greater international support is needed for those countries with less capacity to benefit so that they can boost their pace of development and so that more resources can be devoted to social purposes.

60. The renewed commitment made at the World Summit for Social Development must be more effectively applied, national strategies revised to reflect those priorities, and international cooperation greatly strengthened and extended to increase the pace of poverty reduction. The United Nations system is attempting to work more closely and more pointedly in furthering action at the national and subregional levels and in monitoring progress. The principal requirements are a stronger political will and commitment and more focused technical work.

61. Finally, it is appropriate to recall that poverty eradication is far more than just a national or international issue. Every individual has the capacity to make a contribution - through personal expressions of human solidarity, through lifestyle changes and through participation in community programmes. Networks of people committed to poverty eradication are a necessary part of what must become a successful global campaign.

Notes

[1] Report of the World Social Summit, Copenhagen, 6-12 March 1995 (A/CONF.166/9) (United Nations publication, Sales No. 96.IV.8), chap. I, resolution 1, annex 1, commitment 2.

[2] United Nations publication, Sales No. E.97.IV.1.

[3] United Nations Development Programme. New York, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1997.

[4] United Nations publication, Sales No. E.97.II.D.8.

[5] Human Development Report 1997, p. 5.

[6] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. World Education Report 1995, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1995.

[7] Final Report of the World Conference on Education for All: Meeting Basic Learning Needs, Jomtien, Thailand, 5-9 March 1990, Inter-Agency Commission (UNDP, UNESCO, UNICEF, World Bank) for the World Conference on Education for All, New York, 1990, appendix 1.

[8] World Health Organization, The World Health Report 1997, Geneva.

[9] International Food Policy Research Institute, "1995 Report", Washington, D.C.

[10] For the report of the World Food Summit, which contains the Rome Declaration on World Food Security and the World Food Summit Plan of Action, see Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 'Report of the World Food Summit' (WFS 96/REP).

[11] Report of the World Summit for Social Development, commitment 2.

[12] Human Development Report 1997, p. 112.

Annex

Selected recent literature on poverty and poverty-related issues

There is a significant increase in the publication of poverty and poverty-related literature in recent years. A large collection is available in the Dag Hammarskjold Library. The attempt here is to present a select list of literature, mostly by international bodies published during 1995-1997. (A few earlier reports are also included.)

I. General

United Nations

United Nations, "World Summit for Social Development: The Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action", 6-12 March 1995, New York 1995.

United Nations, "World Economic and Social Survey 1996", New York, 1996.

Commission on Human Rights. "First Report on Human Rights: Extreme Poverty submitted by the Special Rapporteur. Mr. L. Despovy", Geneva, June 1996/E/CN.4/sub.2/1996/13.

United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, "Globalization and Internationalization: Efforts of International Economic Relations on Poverty". Geneva 1996 (UNCTAD/ECDC/PA/4/Rev.1)

Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, "The Equity Gap; First Regional Consequences in Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development, Sao Paulo, Brazil, 6-9 April 1997", Santiago, 1997 (LC/E.1954 (CONF.86/3)).

Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, "Social Panorama of Latin America", Santiago, 1996.

United Nations, "1997 World Report on the Social Situation", New York, E/CN.5/1997/8.

United Nations funds and programmes

United Nations Development Programme, "Human Development Report 1995". New York, 1995 (Theme: Gender of human development.)

United Nations Development Programme, "Human Development Report 1996". New York, 1996 (Theme: Economic growth and human development.)

United Nations Development Programme, "Human Development Report 1997". New York 1997 (Theme: Human development to eradicate poverty.)

United Nations Children's Fund, "The Progress of Nation". New York, 1996.

United Nations Development "Human Development Report 1997". New York, 1997 (Theme: Human development to eradicate poverty.)

United Nations Children's Fund, "The State of the World's Children 1997", New York 1997.

Specialized agencies and others

International Labour, "Statistics on Poverty and Income Distribution", Geneva 1996, and "World Employment 1996/97", Geneva 1997.

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, "World Education Report 1995". Oxford Publishing Office, 1995.

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